

PUBLISH OR PERISH

Before its acquisition by the *Reader's Digest* three years ago, Funk and Wagnalls was best known as the publisher of that dictionary with the funny name. Since then it has been publishing furiously, its list highlighted by titles like *America is in Danger*, by Gen. Curtis LeMay.

On Dec. 11, just in time for the Christmas season, they will publish *The Fall of Khrushchev* by William Hyland and Richard Wallace Shryock.

Most books of this caliber have a substantial credit line for their authors, often including intimate detail about the author's second wife's third husband. Hyland and Shryock's blurb is bleak: "William Hyland and Richard W. Shryock, longtime students of Soviet affairs, are currently employed by the Federal government."

Our suspicions aroused, we called the publicity department of Funk and Wagnalls to inquire if the identity of the authors could be made any more specific. We were told that instructions had been left with them that the nature of the authors' employ was not to be divulged to anyone, and that included Catholic journals. In the face of that rebuff, *Commonweal* placed a person-to-person call to Mr. Hyland at the Central Intelligence Agency (202/351-1100). Hyland himself was unapologetic about all the secrecy: he readily admitted working for the CIA, acknowledged the book was his, and insisted that the dodge was in order to insure that "no one would get the idea that the book represented official policy of the CIA." He conceded that there might have been better ways to conceal his identity since now people might get the idea that the Agency was still funnelling its stuff out to the public under various covers.

A call to the U.S. Information Agency, which was caught in 1966 by Congressman Lipscomb of California in the act of subsidizing publishing concerns, revealed that *The Fall of Khrushchev* is currently being considered for distribution abroad. The woman there is Harriet Baumgartner, Chief of the Appraisals Branch.

There was no record at Funk and Wagnalls on how the book came to be placed with them. The Executive Editor, Emile Capouya, denied that any advance orders had been placed for the book by any Federal agency.

Funk and Wagnalls executives were somewhat anxious about the book, and they debated the advisability of publishing it without identifying the authors. But the result of their deliberations was that if they did not publish it, some other publisher would. Moreover, there was some sympathy for the efforts of the Agency to legitimize itself by publishing books of high academic caliber. How this was possible if the CIA were not credited on the book was not entirely clear, but there are indications that *Khrushchev* is just one of several books like it to follow. It all comes down to image building, we were told, improving the name of the CIA on the campus, where relations have become strained in recent years.

Funk and Wagnalls was in the news last summer in another case of unprofessional publishing. Having assured F & W editors that there would be freedom on editorial matters, *Reader's Digest* Executive Editor Hobart Lewis decided to bump Sam Baker's *The Permissible Lie*—a book critical of the advertising industry—from its list, after several thousand copies had already been printed. The reason: "We simply don't want to sponsor Mr. Baker's message." As for the independence of Funk and Wagnalls from *Digest* policies, Lewis merely commented: "We'll have a closer liaison from now on."

It is not clear from this instance that the *Digest* is operating as a CIA conduit—perhaps it's the other way around. What is apparent is that last year's disclosures of CIA infiltration of allegedly private organizations did not serve to change these practices if the publication of *The Fall of Khrushchev* is any indication—despite the pledges of Roger Helms and Secretary Rusk.

Perhaps the *Digest* and Funk and Wagnalls people should take another look at their own promotional copy for *The Permissible Lie*: "False claims, cleverly distorted copy, and even downright lies are the habitual language of much of our television, radio, and magazine advertising. . . . Baker shows . . . how misleading claims damage the product, the public, the agency that prepares the copy, and the medium that carries the message. . . ."